

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, March 23, 2010***SENATE***Tuesday, March 23, 2010*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Dr. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde, who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Prof. George Maxwell Richards, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. JOEL PRIMUS

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, JOEL PRIMUS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 23rd March, 2010 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Dr. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 15th day of March, 2010.”

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Joel Primus took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES
(SEN. WADE MARK)**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, on the last occasion Sen. Linus Rogers raised a matter of privilege against Sen. Wade Mark, concerning statements made on March 09, 2010, concerning a private citizen, Mr. Unanan Persad, a private company, Air Transit Clearing House Limited and their relationship with the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority.

According to Sen. Rogers, the following words of Sen. Mark are not true, and I quote:

"When I looked at where Air Transit Clearing House Limited is located, No. 83 Rivulet Road, Point Lisas, Trinidad, and I go to the list of directors of this company, I see a name called Unanan Persad, in trust for and on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority."

Sen. Rogers in his correspondence to me submitted a copy of the articles of the incorporation dated December 29, 2005:

A declaration of compliance dated December 29, 2005;

A notice of directors dated December 29, 2005;

A notice of address dated December 29, 2005; and

A notice of secretary dated December 29, 2005 of the said company.

Mr. Unanan Persad's name does not appear on any of these documents, and I have no information regarding any other more recent documents that are in fact legally required.

It is clear then, that the difference between Sen. Mark's words and the information supplied by Sen. Rogers must be fully ventilated. I rule, therefore, that the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Licensing Division
(Arrangement to Computerize Records)**

30. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister inform this Senate:

- A. Whether the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has entered into a government-to-government arrangement with the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia to computerize the records of the Licensing Division?
- B. (i) if the answer to (A) is in the affirmative, would the hon. Minister state the cost of such arrangement to the Government; and
(ii) when would this exercise be completed?
- C. What steps have been taken to secure the integrity of the Licensing Division during this exercise?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Mr. President. No, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has not entered into a government-to-government arrangement with the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia to computerize the records of the Licensing Division. However, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has executed a heads of agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia, Canada, in respect of the establishment of a Motor Vehicle Authority in Trinidad and Tobago.

This agreement provides for:

1. The Province of Nova Scotia to provide information, advice on subject matter expertise;
2. Access to the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Registry (MVR) software under the terms of a software agreement; and
3. Information related to the deployment of system programmes and change management.

The heads of agreement was subsequently activated by the Ministry of Works and Transport, through the execution of an implementation facilitation agreement and a software licence agreement. The implementation facilitation agreement enables Nova Scotia to assist the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, among other things, in the transformation of the Licensing Department into a modern customer driven organization, and to share information with respect to its experiences in the development, operation and administration of the Nova Scotia system of motor vehicle registration, inter alia.

The software licence agreement provides the Government of the Trinidad and Tobago with a licence to use the Nova Scotia software, and to alter and modify the system to suit the conditions of Trinidad and Tobago.

The cost of this agreement to the Government is Canadian \$820,000.

The agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Province of Nova Scotia, Canada, is for a one-year renewable period.

The following steps have been taken to secure the integrity of the records of the Licensing Department during the exercise.

- i. A disaster recovery project which entails the digitizing of key paper records for electronic storage and retrieval has been developed, and is currently being implemented;
- ii. The records of the Licensing Department were relocated to a secure offsite location;
- iii. The Defence Force was utilized in the relocation of the records of the Licensing Department to a secured location.

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, could the hon. Minister indicate to this Senate whether he is aware that the software referred to, that has been used in Nova Scotia Province has not been successful in that province; therefore, in those circumstances what guarantees could the hon. Minister give to this Parliament that the application of this new software will work in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, I am not aware that the software in question has not been successfully implemented, and none of the assertions made by Sen. Mark are correct.

Sen. Mark: If the Minister becomes aware and it has been brought to his attention that that particular software has been a colossal failure in the Province of Nova Scotia, would the Minister be prepared to reconsider this arrangement?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, the Ministry of Works and Transport has thoroughly investigated reports of inadequate software and found them to be completely untrue.

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, could the hon. Minister indicate to this Senate, whether the integrity of the records that have been now sent to Chaguaramas, can be guaranteed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago having regard to its current location?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, as I indicated, the Defence Force was utilized in the relocation of the records to the secured location. I am satisfied that the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force is capable of guaranteeing the safety and security of the records.

Sen. Mark: One final question, Mr. President. Would the hon. Minister indicate to the Senate whether he is aware that already the population has begun to experience challenges in terms of accessing information at the Licensing Offices, particularly in Port of Spain and St. James?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, I am not so aware.

Sen. Oudit: Hon. Minister, you indicated that you had incorrect reports and you examined these. Based on that, you saw that all these reports were incorrect, could you inform the public what were the results of your reports and your examination?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, I did not come here today for a debate, but I will try my best. There was a scurrilous newspaper report in the local press sometime ago, which alleged that there were problems with the software. This was thoroughly investigated with the Province of Nova Scotia, and our consultants, and persons in Canada, and the information and reports were found to be false.

Sen. Oudit: Would you indicate the name of the consultant who had examined these?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. President, no problem. I would stay here whole day if it is necessary. The name of the consultants engaged by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is the Barenton Group of Canada.

Mr. President: Question No. 1 by Sen. Annisette is for the Minister of Health, but Sen. Annisette is not here. Is anyone on the Independent Bench charged with the responsibility of putting the question? No? Very well! So, too, with question No. 2.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Michael Annisette:

**Landate Matter
(Findings of)**

1. Could the hon. Minister of Health inform this Senate of the findings of the Ministry's enquiry into the Landate matter?

**Landate
(Commission of Enquiry)**

2. Could the hon. Attorney General indicate to this Senate what action the Government intends to take with respect to:

- (i) the findings of the Commission of Enquiry into the Scarborough Hospital; and
- (ii) its investigation into the matter which included Landate?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

1.45 p.m.

**Agricultural Access Roads
(Details of Reconstruction)**

32. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

With respect to the reconstruction of agricultural access roads, could the Minister indicate to the Senate:

- (a) the number of agricultural access roads reconstructed for the years 2008 and 2009; and
- (b) the number of agricultural access roads programmed for reconstruction in 2010?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Sen. The Hon. Arnold Piggott): Mr. President, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources undertook the construction and improvement of agricultural access roads as follows: For fiscal 2007/2008, 27 agricultural access roads, totalling approximately 36 kilometres, were reconstructed, while 31 roads with approximately 53 kilometres were maintained. In 2008/2009, some 25 agricultural access roads were reconstructed spanning approximately 35 kilometres. Generally 1,000 farmers who cultivate approximately 2,250 hectares of agricultural land benefited from this programme.

Areas benefiting from these access roads include: Mamoral, Petit Valley, Moruga, Balandra, Coryal, Tamana Hill, Cumuto, Nariva, Manzanilla, Paria, Tabaquite, Penal Rock Road, Esmeralda, Talparo, Plum Mitan, Cunupia, Cumana, Morne Diablo, Piparo, Biche, Los Iros and Rio Claro.

Additionally, maintenance work was undertaken on a further 28 agricultural access roads, with a total length of approximately 26 kilometres, servicing approximately 2,000 hectares of agricultural land to the benefit of an additional 1,200 farmers. Areas benefiting from these improved access roads, included: Sans Souci, Caigual, North Manzanilla, Wallerfield, Maloney, San Raphael, Chin Chin Road, Freeport, Cunupia, Aranguez North, Cedros, Penal, Quinam Road, Palo Seco, Guayaguayare, Erin, Manzanilla, Blanchisseuse, Maracas and Mayaro.

In summary, in fiscal years 2007/2008, and 2008/2009, 158 kilometres of access roads were developed and maintained, benefiting some 2,200 farmers on some 4,250 hectares of land throughout the country.

In fiscal 2009/2010, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago proposes to construct and rehabilitate some 335 agricultural access roads in the food basket areas and major food producing areas, spanning some 492 kilometres. The roads are estimated to service some 3,280 farmers.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Mark: Could the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources indicate to this Parliament whether some unit within his Ministry would be responsible for the construction of agricultural access roads?

As I am on my legs, I will also ask: What percentage of the agricultural access roads have been addressed, given what you have just said, and what percentage remains to be addressed in terms of the coming period?

Sen. The Hon. A. Piggott: The agency of state facilitating the provision of access road is the Estate Management Business Development Company. I could not, at this time, say what percentage of work has been completed and how much is yet to be done. I have given that which we have programmed to be done.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Construction Sector (Policy and Governance Issues)

The Minister in the office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. President, I am authorized by the Cabinet to make this statement to the Senate on "Policy and Governance Issues in the Construction Sector".

Early in the life of 2002/2007 PNM administration, it became quite clear that implementation of the public policy initiatives to achieve Vision 2020, which required collaborative and coordinated access, across ministries and departments of Government, was a substantial challenge. Implementation was less than efficient and adequate, thereby constraining the modernization thrust and public policy initiatives to achieve Vision 2020.

Mr. President, the Government needed to improve planning and organization and, for that reason, put in place ministerial committees to provide guidance and oversight in the implementation of projects and programmes, all having complexities of endeavour.

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These committees have within their membership technical and practical expertise to direct and implement the relevant initiatives through collaborative and coordinative action. The ministerial committees are supported by technical advisory groups comprised of senior officials from relevant ministries and agencies.

On December 13, 2007, the Government reconstituted and expanded the membership of the ministerial committee for construction oversight, based on the critical role which the construction sector was playing in national development as well as the need for the appropriate design of structures, systems and programmes to effect desirable and efficient outcomes.

The committee, under my chairmanship, includes 10 ministers with responsibility for labour and small and micro enterprises, works and transport, science and technology and tertiary education, education, legal affairs, energy and energy industries, local government, community development, culture and gender affairs, information, planning, housing and the environment.

Eight principal professional organizations are represented as well. Trinidad and Tobago Contractors Association, the Trinidad and Tobago institute of Architects, the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago, the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, the Quarry Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Society of Planners.

The committee also includes, in light of its key role in the construction sector, a representative from UDeCott.

This ministerial committee, as in the case of other such committees, is supported by a technical advisory group comprising senior officials from relevant ministries and agencies, in particular, the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment.

There was broad agreement at the level of the committee that the Joint Consultative Council (JCC) would participate in the deliberations of those matters of concern to that organization.

At the very outset, the ministerial committee developed a short and medium-term work programme, which required policy attention and formation to

improve the functioning of the construction sector. In the short-term, the ministerial committee has been able to resolve a range of issues including:

- A policy has been put in place whereby the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is enhancing human resource development and training plans to improve the technical and professional skill set for workers in the construction industry and report to the committee on a regular basis;
- access roads to certain quarries have been identified for rehabilitation and regular maintenance;
- the Certificates of Skills Recognition Programme to which skilled persons move within the Caricom Single Market and Economy has been clarified; and
- the use of the FIDIC and/or JCT standard contracts have been approved as the preferred form of construction contracts.

Mr. President, the ministerial committee agreed that two further issues should be addressed within the medium-term framework:

- the adoption of a revised public policy on procurement; and
- the registration and licensing of professionals and contractors.

The Government is actively reviewing the questions of procurement of goods and services and expects to complete that review by July 30, 2010. The Government will be establishing the broad, operational and policy framework for the procurement in the construction sector. It is aimed at developing a globally competitive construction sector, with special consideration being given to the enhancement of local content and participation and the continued usage of transparent and effective procurement procedures.

The Government has been, in the meantime, strengthening the procurement processes for many large and important projects through the establishment of government structures within which ministerial committees supported by technical advisory groups manage procurement arrangements. This governance structure, including the use of robust computer driven technologies, has proven to be useful and effective and presentation on the system has been made by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to the committee.

This arrangement would inform a revised procurement policy, as would some of the recommendations which are expected to emerge from the report of the Uff Commission of Enquiry into the Construction Sector.

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The ministerial committee considered that regulation of the construction sector should be accorded the highest priority and there was broad agreement among stakeholders that draft legislation addressing the registration and licensing of professionals, within the various disciplines of the construction sector, should be subject to collaborative arrangements between the professional and contracting organizations and the relevant Government ministries, prior to consideration by the ministerial committee and Cabinet.

Substantial work has taken place and pieces of draft legislation are at varying stages of completion. I wish to provide this honourable Senate with a status report which was provided to the committee on March 10, 2010:

1. The registration and licensing of engineers is being addressed by the Ministry of Works and Transport in consultation with the Board of Engineering of Trinidad and Tobago and the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago. In December 2009, a draft policy document on the registration and licensing of engineers in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as proposed amendments with respect to the Engineering Profession Act, have been completed and are now being reviewed by the Ministry of Works and Transport.
2. The registration and licensing of architects is being addressed by the Ministry of Works and Transport in consultation with the Institute of Architects of Trinidad and Tobago. The similarities which exist between the Engineering Profession Act and the Architecture Profession Act, allow for the leveraging of legislative and regulatory principles, so that the policy apparatus with respect to the engineering profession, would inform the policy relating to the architecture profession.
3. The registration and licensing of quantity surveyors is being addressed by the Ministry of Works and Transport in consultation with the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago and the drafting of the new legislation is in progress.
4. The registration and licensing of contractors is being addressed by the Ministry of Works and Transport, in consultation with the Trinidad and Tobago Contractors' Association and, as an initial step, the draft policy document, as a draft of the proposed legislation, have been completed and are now being reviewed by the Ministry of Works and Transport.
5. The registration and licensing of planners is being addressed by the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, in consultation with

the Trinidad and Tobago Society of Planners, which has recently submitted a draft bill for the registration and licensing of urban and regional planners to the Ministry.

6. The registration and licensing of land surveyors is being addressed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in consultation with the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago. Work is aimed at revising the Land Surveyors Act, No. 33 of 1996.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the ministerial committee has charted a way forward for bringing to fruition these pieces of regulatory legislation. We are committed to ensuring that the construction sector is governed by international best practice, whether through procurement standards or through strict adherence to codes and conduct. The Government will be bringing to Parliament shortly the respective pieces of draft and revised legislation for the registration and licensing of professional contractors so as to ensure that the best practice governance arrangements prevail in the industry.

In light of its importance for national development, the Government and the stakeholders agreed that this sector cannot be left without proper regulatory arrangement. The consistent calls for registration by the various professional and contracting associations within this sector have been heard and these arrangements will help the country achieve its Vision 2020 objectives.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. President, from this statement, it is clear that substantial progress has been made in the establishment of a proper relationship between the construction industry and the developmental objectives of the State.

We believe in the development of our local professionals whether in the construction sector, or in any other area of national endeavour and we are committed to working with all groups in the society as we seek to establish transparent and accountable processes and procedures for the achievement of our national development objective.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SYMBOLIC GESTURE FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Sen. Gail Merhair: Mr. President, it is with the greatest of humility that I move the following Motion listed in my name:

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Whereas Sir Ellis Emmanuel Innocent Clarke, TC, GCMG served this country with distinction as Solicitor General, Deputy Colonial Secretary, Attorney General, Ambassador, as the main architect of the 1962 Independence Constitution, Governor General and President;

And whereas Noor Mohammed Hassanali served this country with distinction as Magistrate, Senior Crown Counsel, Assistant Solicitor General, Judge of the High Court and Court of Appeal and President;

And whereas Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson served this country with distinction as Prime Minister and defended the rights and freedoms enshrined in our democratic Constitution during the 1990 attempted coup and has been internationally recognized for his efforts to establish the International Criminal Court in 2002;

And whereas George Michael Chambers served this nation with distinction as Prime Minister;

Be it resolved that the Government take immediate steps to rename:

- (i) The Churchill Roosevelt Highway as the Ellis Clarke Highway;
- (ii) The Hall of Justice as the Noor Hassanali Hall of Justice;
- (iii) The Crown Point International Airport as the Arthur N. R. Robinson International Airport; and
- (iv) Wrightson Road as the George Chambers Avenue.

as a symbolic gesture of national gratefulness for their many years of distinguished service.

Mr. President, every day we are bombarded in the media with graphic images of all sorts of crimes: Murders, robberies, rapes, domestic violence, drugs, gangs, gang warfare, indiscipline in schools and a whole host of negative information that, when given the chance to prevail, portrays my beautiful country, our beautiful country Trinidad and Tobago in a fashion that is unpalatable.

I know our country Trinidad and Tobago may have many faults with all the crime and poverty that exist, it is still one of the best places in the world to live. We compare favourably among many nations in terms of our gross domestic product per capita, and it can be argued that Trinidad and Tobago will have an extremely favourable ranking among nations of the world when it comes to our gross national happiness.

For those of you who do not know what the gross national happiness or (GNH) index is, it is a concept that was developed in an attempt to define an indicator that measures quality of life, or social progress in more holistic and psychological terms than the GDP. It can also be argued that the gross national happiness ratings peaks during Carnival time and at other major festivals and, of course, we all know why that happens.

The GNH as outlined in the Unhappiness Planet Index published by the new economics foundation uses a socio-economic matrix to measure countries wellness in terms of economy, the environment, in terms of physical, mental workplace and social and political attributes. The new economics foundation is, in fact, a think-and-do tank in the United Kingdom that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being.

Mr. President, since our independence in 1962, we have developed a prosperous nation and this is quite evident by our active and stable democracy. Some of us have even jokingly said from time to time that "God is a Trini", seeing that we have been able to avoid many major disasters in my recent memory. We have, in fact, indeed assumed our rightful place in the Caribbean region as leaders and set the pace for the region's development.

All this did not happen overnight, nor did it happen on its own. It is indeed, what I would call a summation of collective efforts by many fine and distinguished gentlemen who were given the opportunity to lead our nation through its young stages of democracy. These distinguished citizens stood for principles, and to a large extent, sacrificed many personal gains in order to serve their country, our country Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, this was no easy task and our nation was faced with many challenges during its early years of development. We had to face the transition from colonial rule to full independence in 1962 and republican status a mere 14 years after. Countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Australia and Canada are a few members of the Commonwealth yet to achieve republican status, and we have been able to do so 14 years after our independence status.

Our country was faced with a concentration of wealth outside the hands of the majority of the population and to a large extent, I think we have overcome this. We are faced with the challenge of educating a population to meet the demands of new realities taking place. We have faced festering prejudice among the races and if left unattended, could have led to a lot of ethnic clashes and confrontations as

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have happened in other parts of the world such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Sudan, China, Nigeria and Kenya just to name a few.

Our leaders, over time, all embraced what is truly Trinidad and Tobago, a melting pot of diversity where every creed and race was able to find an equal place. Our leaders, knowing full well the awesome responsibilities that lay on their shoulders, stood up to the challenges placed before them and today, we as a nation can boast of the many great achievements in a variety of fields that we in Trinidad and Tobago have been able to accomplish.

These fields have not been limited to—and I have not been extensive—just education, sports, science, culture, medicine, religion, just to name a few. We have even won many beauty awards in the Miss World and the Miss Universe areas.

The leaders in whom we placed our trust had to perform difficult tasks, balancing acts, servicing the nation as a whole through a wide variety of institutions whilst ensuring that all citizens benefited from the national patrimony. It was not easy and the road might have been a treacherous one and circumstances needed to be navigated, but we as a people were left stronger, more resilient and ready to embrace the new millennium with all its challenges and uncertainties.

The nation's first Prime Minister who is often referred to many times in this Senate and in other places as "Father of the nation", Dr. Eric Williams, was instrumental in shaping the destiny of this, our great twin island Republic, but he was not alone.

Mr. President, today I move a Motion essentially honouring four great men who have given immeasurable service to Trinidad and Tobago. This Motion in no way limits the Government to undertaking only the renaming of landmarks to honour these four fine gentlemen, nor it does not limit in time the ability for us to honour others.

Today, I seek to honour four great sons of the soil, four distinguished gentlemen who have left their engraved mark in the national psyche. Four men who have left an impression on our national tapestry and will forever remain in Trinidad and Tobago's history for generations to come.

Mr. President, it is high time we as a country honour our post-independent leaders for the courage they have shown, the determination and tenacity in the face of crisis, for the love and compassion in times they have shown for national mourning, and understanding for the future potential for us as a people.

Mr. President, I begin with Sir Ellis Emmanuel Innocent Clarke, TC, GCMG who was the second and last Governor General of Trinidad and Tobago and the first President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Sir Ellis was one of the main architects of our 1962 Independence Constitution. He served as Solicitor General from 1954—1956, Deputy Colonial Secretary from 1956 to 1957 and Attorney General from 1957—1962.

After Independence in 1962, he served as Ambassador to the United States, Canada, Mexico and permanent representative to the United Nations. In 1972, he succeeded Sir Solomon Hochoy as Governor General and when we became a Republic in 1976, Sir Ellis was unanimously elected by the Electoral College as the country's first President and served in the capacity for two terms until 1987.

Sir Ellis Clarke was invested as a companion of St. Michael and St. George by Queen Elizabeth II in 1960 and was awarded a knighthood as a Knight Grand Cross of that Order in 1972. He was one of six experts worldwide who was asked to submit reports to Australia's Republic Advisory Committee in 1993 detailing Trinidad and Tobago's experience in moving from a constitutional Monarchy to a Republic. Sir Ellis remains active and is still influential in dispute resolution, matters of law, especially constitutional issues and diplomatic conflicts. Viewed by many as the "Grandfather of the Nation", Sir Ellis to this day attends mass and serves in a variety of communities.

I propose that the Government rename the Churchill Roosevelt Highway to Ellis Clarke Highway which will signal a break from our colonial past and recognize Sir Ellis for his tremendous contribution he has made to the development of this nation. The highway in question serves as a major artery for a majority of the population who traverse to the East-West Corridor and who travel between North-South. It symbolizes the heartbeat of a nation on the move and I believe it is a fitting tribute to name the highway after a great son of the nation.

Mr. President, Noor Mohammed Hassanali was the second President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and served from 1987—1997, he worked as a lawyer in private practice from 1948—1953 when he was appointed as a magistrate.

2.15 p.m.

In 1960 he was appointed senior magistrate and later that year was appointed Senior Crown Counsel in the Attorney General's Chambers. In 1965, he was appointed Assistant Solicitor General and the following year he was appointed a judge of the High Court. In 1978, he was appointed to the Court of Appeal and he retired on April 14, 1985.

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President Hassanali has been described as one of the most neutral, reserved and dignified persons in the history of Trinidad and Tobago politics. When he was inaugurated in 1987, he was described as a person of impeccable credentials who had a reputation for humility and honesty of the highest order. As a Muslim, President Hassanali chose not to serve alcoholic beverages at the President's House, a decision that was not viewed at all in Trinidad and Tobago as controversial by the public. He was also the first Muslim Head of State in the Western Hemisphere.

Dr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community summed it up well in his condolences on the death of President Hassanali in 2006. I quote from Dr. Carrington:

"It is with deep regret that the Caribbean Community notes the death of the former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Noor Hassanali.

Mr. Hassanali served as President during one of the most trying times in the recent history of his country. Throughout it all, he carried out his duties with dignity, commitment and statesmanship which earned great respect for his Office and himself. His quiet demeanour, humility and unobtrusive style endeared him to the citizens of his country, a country which he also served as prosecutor, magistrate and Appeal Court judge. His passing is a tremendous loss to the entire nation."

Given his exemplary stewardship in the service of country and law, I propose that the Government take all the necessary steps to rename the Hall of Justice the Noor Hassanali Hall of Justice in honour of this great man, but it is only a small token for a life of service and love.

Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson served as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago from 1997 to 2003 and before that, served as Prime Minister from 1986 to 1991. President Robinson has had a long and distinguished career in politics, holding several Cabinet portfolios, leaving the national Parliament to become the first Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly in 1980. Mr. Robinson then led the National Alliance for Reconstruction to a resounding victory at the polls in 1986, as a result assuming the mantle of leadership.

During the period 1986 to 1991, Trinidad and Tobago was forced into a deep recession and the then Prime Minister Robinson was forced to make very tough decisions in the interest of the nation, and I am sure that we all would agree that while these measures were severely unpopular, they were extremely necessary at that point in time and it provided the platform for the many years of prosperity that we enjoyed after. And we did have some very difficult days.

The then Prime Minister Robinson was confronted with the greatest threat this country has ever faced and that was to the established order of democracy and good governance. That was the attempted insurrection of 1990. The then Prime Minister Robinson and much of his Cabinet, were held hostage for six days by gunmen under the leadership of Bilal Abdullah. When instructed to order his defence force to stop firing at the Red House, the Prime Minister Robinson instead instructed them to attack with full force, an action which earned him severe beating and a shot in his leg from his captors, but it also showed the true measure of a man who was prepared to die for his country.

Mr. Robinson is also remembered as playing an integral part in the formation of the International Criminal Court in 2002, when in 1989 during the 44th session of the UN General Assembly, he proposed the formation of the said court. He has received many honours for his achievement.

President Robinson has not only served this country with great distinction, but he has proven beyond any shadow of a doubt, his loyalty to protecting the values we hold so dear. Some describe him as a great man, a Caribbean man even and for his service to this country he will always be remembered. As a sign of appreciation I propose, through this Motion, that the Government rename the Crown Point International Airport, the Arthur NR Robinson International Airport in honour of the third President of our Republic.

Trinidad and Tobago's second Prime Minister, George Michael Chambers, had the unenviable task and perhaps an impossible one at that, to fill the shoes of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, "Father of the nation". The former law clerk, a graduate of Burke College and Osmond High School, maintained a quiet dignity while many tried to pull him down because he did not have, what many considered, Prime Minister Williams' QRC and Oxford type distinction and education. But in a sense I think his perceived weakness was also his strength. Prime Minister Chambers, who was seen as the least of the apostles, was not regarded as a threat to anyone and was therefore able to hold both country and political party together and he gave the PNM the largest political mandate in the history at the general election of November 1981. His no-nonsense approach, which saw him declaring in his first speech following his unanimous acclamation as political leader of the PNM in May 1981, was that, and I quote:

"What right in this country must be kept right and what is wrong must be put right"

It won wide appeal.

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It helped tremendously that he was not a vindictive person and did not seek to go after anyone. In fact, he was never blinded by party loyalty and in search for talent he brought to his Cabinet persons from outside the PNM party, including former opposition supporters, John Eckstein and Wendell Mottley. But Prime Minister Chambers was a victim of unfavourable circumstances which were, perhaps, beyond his control. Oil prices which rose during Prime Minister Williams' tenure and which led to the growth of the economy, went into a free fall during his time, and Prime Minister Chambers had a very difficult time as he tried to steer the economy with US \$9 a barrel from a state of collapse.

He may best be remembered as a man who coined the term: "Fete over, back to work", urging a self-indulgent Trinidad and Tobago oil boom population to buckle down to reality. The general consensus was that he managed this process well, but the ordinary man did not think so because the adjustment measures put to stem the collapse hit the people where it hurt them the most and that was in their pockets.

One of the highlights of Prime Minister Chambers' term was his principled stand against the US-led invasion of Grenada in October 1983 which lost him many friends, both in the Caribbean and in North America. Prime Minister Chambers protested the fact that the United States did not choose to consult Trinidad and Tobago, "a black speck of dust". And his supporters argued that his contribution to national development spanned other areas. They point out that he accepted the recommendation of the then National Security Minister, John Donaldson, to establish a Commission of Enquiry under Justice Garvin Scott into the drug situation. The report was later made public by his successor.

A quiet and a humble soul, Prime Minister George Michael Chambers served this nation with a dignity that is most rare. He stood for what was right, with a dignity and in the best interest of this nation, whether it was popular or not, and that is truly amazing. It is for this service to the nation, I propose that Wrightson Road be renamed George Chambers Avenue in honour of his contribution to the nation and its people.

At this time, I would like to propose that we honour these fine, distinguished gentlemen for their unwavering service to Trinidad and Tobago. These fine gentlemen led by example and governed with principles of the highest order. They led with distinction, even in the face of hostility at times from different sections of society. Their leadership was based on what was right for Trinidad and Tobago, and not necessarily what was popular. Although President Hassanali and

Prime Minister Chambers are no longer with us, I do not think we should hesitate further to honour these gentlemen who gave lifelong service and commitment to not only God but to our country.

I do not think we should hesitate to honour both President Sir Ellis Clarke and Arthur NR Robinson. These two great men are still with us and we should seize the moment to pay tribute to them. We are a grateful nation and we should always remember this.

I propose the renaming of these thoroughfares and landmarks after these honourable men for a reason. The existence of a highway or an airport or a Hall of Justice is not limited to just a plate; it is not limited to just a name or just graphics or just by representing a GPS system. A name has the same function as branding. They tell a story about a place. They tell about our history, our city, our country and it is our opportunity to tell that story of Trinidad and Tobago. It is to tell that story of our character, of what defines us, of what makes us the people who we are and the men who have led this nation through thick and thin.

The naming of these landmarks represents our generation claiming a piece of history for ourselves. It is time we replace the relics of our colonial past with those who have made a significant contribution to our development as a nation after our independence. We are no longer under colonial rule. Precedence has already been set and we have already named such highways as the Uriah Butler, Rienzi Kirton and the Solomon Hochoy Highway. There has also been precedence in other countries.

- In New York, we have the JFK International Airport.
- In Castries, St. Lucia, we have the John Compton Highway, and this was named after him before his death.
- In Guyana, there is the Cheddi Jagan International Airport.
- In Paris, France, we have the Charles De Gaulle Airport.
- In Venice, Italy, we have the Marco Polo Airport.

All these are just examples of highways and airports in other parts of the world that have been named after distinguished citizens.

Right here in Trinidad and Tobago we have had the Financial Complex in Port of Spain and the Medical Complex at Mount Hope named after our first Prime Minister. A number of stadia are named after sporting personalities. We have a lot of precedence. We have only to act and I say that we should act now.

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What does it take for a nation like ours to become patriotic? Are we really serious about patriotism? Or are we only patriotic when we win something or are about to win something? I am sure some of us would remember November 19, 1989 when national flags were everywhere, on vehicles, on buildings and everybody was wearing a red T-shirt. Why? Because we were on the verge of winning the World Cup and all the patriotism ended right after. The same thing happened when we qualified in 2006 for the World Cup in Germany and some of us might experience it when we go to the Trini Posse stand for cricket, when the West Indies is winning, I might add.

We must take our country seriously and we must honour those who have given their lives and of their efforts to ensure we, the people, enjoy a stable and productive lifestyle, where every man and woman is equal under the sun.

2.30 p.m.

We must recognize those who have worked tirelessly so that we can enjoy the fruits of a progressive society. We must exercise true patriotism. What is patriotism? Patriotism is going to work and being a productive member of society. Patriotism is helping others in your community who are in need. Patriotism is saying what I can do; not what is in it for me. Patriotism is honouring those who have given years of service to this nation.

I stand before the Senate today to honour these four great men: Sir Ellis Emmanuel Innocent Clarke, Noor Mohammed Hassanali, Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson and George Michael Chambers—gentle giants, each in his own right. I ask fellow Senators to stand with me to pay tribute to these servants of the State.

In preparing for this Motion, I am reminded of a poem I once read entitled *The Leader*, and it is written anonymously. I think this poem truly epitomizes each and every quality and character of the four gentlemen I wish to honour:

“Patient and steady with all he must bear,
Ready to meet every challenge with care,
Easy in manner, yet solid as steel,
Strong in his faith, refreshingly real,
Isn't afraid to propose what is bold,
Doesn't conform to the usual mold,

Eyes that have foresight, for hindsight won't do,
 Never backs down when he sees what is true,
 Tells it all straight, and means it all too,
 Going forward and knowing he's right,
 Even when doubted for why he would fight,
 Over and over he makes his case clear,
 Reaching to touch the ones who won't hear.
 Growing in strength, he won't be unnerved,
 Ever assuring he'll stand by his word."

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Sen. Dr. Balgobin: Mr. President, I second the Motion and reserve the right to speak.

Question proposed.

Sen. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to contribute to the Motion moved by Sen. Gail Merhair.

I remember a quotation by a famous philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who said:

"Gratitude is a duty which ought to be paid, but which none have a right to expect."

There was another quotation made on May 22, 2009:

"With the world on the cusp of change, Trinidad and Tobago stands at an elevated crossroad where opportunity meets possibility. For every step that has brought us this far, we owe an incalculable debt to the many pioneers both sound and unsound."

That statement was made by none other than Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, speaking as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries at the 100th year of petroleum production in Trinidad and Tobago.

I begin my contribution by indicating that we have no problem with honouring people; with naming roads, highways, buildings and constructing monuments to recognize the contribution of people to our society. We must honour our past and those who add value to our lives and this country. There are no problems for us in doing this. At the same time, I think it is important that we be careful when, in trying to do this, we do not erase history.

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Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith would not like to know, for example, that in Chaguanas the very famous Saith Park is renamed and the illustrious name of the Saiths is removed. It carries a history; it carries a lot of what the Saith family contributed. We have to be very careful, in moving to rename highways and so on, while it is important, that we do not erase important aspects of our history.

Simple lessons of the past are very important and sometimes when we speak, like we speak about our colonial past, we run the risk of forgetting the lessons of the past and of cultivating in the minds of young people a certain level of hate. We do not want that. We do not want hate for other societies upon whom we put labels that they did this and that to us and that they were our colonial masters. Instead, we must do our thing; we must develop a culture of mature understanding of our past in our young people and build a future on the platform of forgiveness rather than hate.

Every one of the names indicated by the hon. Senator deserves recognition and praise. This is a Motion that caused me to do a lot of thinking; one might even say philosophical meanderings. While the Motion is intended to give recognition to the contributions of people who have served with commitment to this country, whose penchant for selfless service and whose preparedness to sacrifice their best skills and resources for the benefit of the country cannot be questioned, it is also a Motion that allows us this afternoon and, by extension, the national community, to reflect on our capacity and preparedness, both personal and collective, to live lives of gratitude and appreciation and to express it.

The value of gratitude is the most important asset that any human being could possess and practise. Sometimes I think we even forgot how to say thank you in this society. The words "thank you" are very difficult for many people. Gratitude is a symbol of personal humility and it not only blesses the one who gives it, but the receiver in the sense that the act of appreciation often inspires the receiver to want to do more.

This is a society where people very often celebrate their successes only by gloriously basking in the failure of others. It is the kind of attitude that impoverishes us as a society and reduces this country to unhealthy competitive behaviours.

Societies are prone to measure progress on the basis of characteristics as economic performance, GDP, foreign reserves, management of exchange rates, control of inflation, productivity and performance of labour and so on; on achievements in sport and academia. However, we need to pay attention, in

Trinidad and Tobago, to measuring the progress of society in terms of the practice of human values. Perhaps events like naming a street, a monument or a building gives us an opportunity to look at how well we practise human values, especially appreciation and gratitude. To practise appreciation and gratitude also will help to define us in terms of our civility and interpersonal peace.

To speak with a heart of gratitude is important, however, it becomes even more meaningful when it is symbolized by a material gift, a tangible tribute or something that transcends time and place. We should and we must record our history not only in words, but in symbols.

The party to which I belong, when in government, did that by naming the stadia: the Ato Boldon Stadium, the Mannie Ramjohn Stadium, the Larry Gomes Stadium, the Hasely Crawford Stadium and the Dwight Yorke Stadium. We support this kind of thing, but I have to say that while there are certain categories of people, as society categorizes them, who get an opportunity to have a highway named after them, to be the benefit of good public relations, to enjoy status or position, or to have a building named after them, in this country there are maybe thousands of people equally deserving of praise and recognition who somehow do not get it.

One of the things I was concerned about as Mayor of the Borough of Chaguanas was how the borough progressed through the contributions of others. I went on to have a book done called, *The Contributors—“Profiling the Builders of Chaguanas, Vol. 1”*, in which over 100 persons were profiled in terms of their contribution. It made good reading to read the story of Nurse Barbara Martin, who delivered over 4,000 babies. It was nice to read the story of musician Chander Bali from Felicity; Mr. Clarry Benn who contributed so much to the Unit Trust and others; Daisy Ramroop, who started at nine years old and is today one of the examples of entrepreneurship in the borough of Chaguanas; Hans Hanoomansingh, Mr. Leo Escayg, Mr. Leo John, Fr. Max Murphy, Pundit Rabindranath Maharaj, Pundit Ramdath Vyas, Rev. Burke A. Hamid, Rev. Dr. Flemming E. Joseph and Ronald Lee Tang, amongst others.

When you read these stories, you recognize how many persons have contributed to society, but are not remembered for their contribution. I am not denying the right of any official in this country to be named. I want them to be named because the hon. Senator was correct when she said that the naming of a building or so on is not just the honouring of a person, it represents history, a tradition, a life, a human being.

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What happens to these hundreds of people? Today, I want, in the context of this debate, to pay tribute to what others have been doing to recognize people in our society. Prof. Selwyn Cudjoe of NAEAP, every year, honours people who would not normally be honoured in the list of national awardees. There is a continuing debate about how we should decide who would receive national awards and whether they should be in the domain of one person to decide and whether the committee really has the influence upon it.

There is a gentleman by the name of Ajeet Praimsingh, who, every year for the last ten years or more holds an annual Arrival Day celebration called Mere Desh. When you go there and you listen to the profiles of people who are honoured there, they will never ever be honoured at the national level; yet those people make such an invaluable contribution to the society.

If you look at the National Council for Indian Culture, I am sure that Sen. The Hon. Dr. Saith would have had a chance to visit there during one of those ceremonies. He would tell you how happy his heart would have been to see the kinds of persons who are honoured in those places.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. President, this Motion, therefore, allows me the opportunity to remember the work of other people who are contributing to honouring people and putting their names in the history books. Recognition is important to people and we must encourage people to recognize others. Recognition and appreciation is like a diamond; what you appreciate grows in value. If you appreciate a diamond, the diamond has the kind of value it has.

In that regard, I sometimes wonder, at the level of our schools or a school in a particular village, whether we should not reorient some of the classes where the students can begin to do research on people in their village and document that history. Put it on the walls of their schools and write their own books in their own handwriting, so that 100 years from now, that student's handwriting would be seen. We go to other countries and we see those kinds of things and we honour it and say: "My God, why could this not happen in Trinidad?" Why can it not happen? Villages have history. We should be encouraging our schools and children in the schools to write and document that history, so that we would have an appreciation of our past. We need to search out the country to discover, like we discovered in San Francique, the Banwari Man. We must encourage local communities to set up local museums and their own halls of fame and honour. We must give it state support.

Mr. President, to have a sense of who you are, you must know your past. We must commission more persons to write the history of their local communities. Whenever I want to know something of a local community, I read the works of Michael Anthony, Father de Verteuil, Thomas Harricharan and persons who have spent their lives documenting these things. There is a gentleman in San Fernando who is a journalist. His name is Louis Homer. He is also a historian. He is a remarkable man, when you consider what he is doing largely at his own expense, to record the history of local communities and groups. I was talking to him about people in communities and he pointed out to me: “Do you know the name FEM Hosein?” I said: “I think I do. If I recall, it is the name of a former Mayor of Arima.” Who remembers and honours FEM Hosein? FEM Hosein, in 1931, was the Mayor of Arima. There is something more important about FEM Hosein. FEM Hosein produced a play called “A Miracle Play—High Arima and the Saints”, which utilized some of the legends surrounding the statute and historical information which dealt principally with the Cacique Chief, High Arima and the incidents which led to the last battle between the Carib people and their conquerors. This took place, of course, in a district in the outskirts of Arima and is recorded as the Arena Massacre. That is an important person.

If you look at the name Abdul Sabga, someone regarded as the father of the Syrian community. I understand that the Port of Spain City Corporation is about to honour him by naming a park after him.

If you look further at the name of Lee Lum. Lee Lum is a name that occurs way down in Guayaguayare; a man who emigrated from China in search of greener pastures and ended up in Trinidad in 1885. He set up 60 shops. What is important about him is the fact that he had a role to play in drilling for oil in Trinidad, when he provided the finance to two engineers, in order to have oil wells drilled. We do not remember the name of Lee Lum. There is a group of people in the society, lots of people in the society, who need to be remembered and honoured.

In that regard, the Jamaicans can teach us something. The Jamaicans have set up a National Heroes Policy. They have a National Heroes Park. The policy determines who are buried or interred in that park. I find that to be very instructive, in terms of an example right here in the Caribbean, as to how we might want to proceed.

We talk about history, remembering things that are important and erasing history. I argue that there is some history that must not be erased and must be remembered, because it sometimes tells us about our ancestral courage and what we stood up to; not in the sense of hate, but in the sense of defining our own

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character. For example, in the 1980s, the colonial authorities became increasingly concerned about public gatherings and in 1884, issued an ordinance to prevent the public Hosay commemorations. Thousands of workers who had spent the year building their tadjahs joined a Hindu named Sookoo, in petitioning the government to allow the festival as per the agreement with the Governor who was visiting London during this episode. What is interesting is that all appeals were ignored by the protector of immigrants. Through ignorance, when all of those appeals were ignored by the protector of immigrants, through ignorance of the new July 1884 prohibition, defiance or through both, the tadjahs were taken to the streets at the appointed times and in order of the estates. That was courage of our people. We do not want to forget that. We want to know that as a people, we can stand up for what is right, but we can also stand up against that which is wrong and do so courageously. I would not like to erase this kind of history from our history books.

To conclude this story, the first estate took its tadjahs to the streets and Hosay went ahead in St. James, Port of Spain. The police did not interfere. But in Mon Repos, San Fernando, on Thursday, October 30, 1884, buckshots were fired into the crowd of women, children and men. After shots were fired by the police to disperse the procession, 22 Indians were killed immediately. Later 120 were found with injuries, some who had run to the cane fields to hide during the police attack. That day is commonly referred to in history as the Muhurram Massacre or the Hosay Riots.

It might be good to say that maybe that area in San Fernando should be renamed or a plaque put up somehow to commemorate this, to remind us that our ancestors stood up when they needed to stand up against that which was wrong in the society.

Mr. President, the hon. Sen. Merhair said that one of our Prime Ministers said what is right must remain right and what is wrong be made right, or words to that effect. Things like this, we must make right by honouring this past and also not forgetting it.

In that light, I think it is important to make some suggestions. As I have said, we are all for naming monuments. We are all for doing these things. The party to which I belong, when they were government, actually did that. It is important to be recognized.

I think the time has come for me to propose that we need national guidelines in Trinidad and Tobago, for the purpose of naming roads and constructing

monuments, especially when it is derived from the level of government. We need a process to do this. We need to develop national consensus as to how we proceed to name places.

We do not want a situation like that which arose some years ago, in the case of V. S Naipaul, where it was suggested that the library be named after him. Then that suggestion was thrown out. We do not want a case where somebody is given the highest award in Trinidad and we discover something else about the person. We want to have transparency in how this is done, so that the national population can bring its views to bear upon this. So when we honour somebody, it is because the country honours them and because there is consensus about honouring them and doing the things that we have to do.

Mr. President, with these few words, I would like to close. I agree, history is written through the lives of our people. There are many examples in our country which can inspire the lives of our people. I agree that the past should not be dishonoured, but the past should be honoured. I want to propose that this Motion be sent to a select committee of the Senate, to make recommendations along the line which I have suggested.

I thank you, Sir.

Sen. Dana Seetahal SC: Thank you very much, Mr. President. It seems to me ironic in this country where single women are regarded as a sort of fundamental in the society—we have essentially a matriarchal society—we recognize that women are the ones responsible for, not just honing a family but bringing up children according to our values, those are the persons who attend PTA meetings, who look after the children, buy their clothes, go to school with them and so on, yet every single person—I heard my colleague, Sen. Dr. Rambachan mention—that we should honour was a man; every single one. There was no mention of any recognition that women in this country—[*Interruption*] if you did, it was—I said what I heard—so it may have been en passant. Substantially there were only men. The Motion itself treats to a recognition of men.

We have heard, in the last 10 years, of women trumping the engineering faculty, the Law School, top engineer, top accountant, best CEOs, best journalist and calypsonians. Whether it is now or not, we have been hearing of it, yet it does not, that fact, reflect itself, in terms of the persons we honour. We seem to feel that in terms of subsidiary recognition, I say subsidiary in the sense that it is more temporary such as mother of the year, secretary of the year, or even woman of the year, you are forgotten until the next year, that it is okay. But, when it comes to

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substantive recognition, women are given the boot in Trinidad and Tobago, so to speak. [*Interruption*] So to speak!

There seems to be very little acknowledgement that even apart from their own substantive contribution, in the case of great men, behind every great man is a woman or more, a mother and a wife, a daughter—that is true. Take for instance, the plethora of male judges in our High Court. I would give you an example. Some years ago, I attended an in-house meeting with a judge and he was telling me something about my thin black and white striped jacket not being totally black and inappropriate. I said: “Well, I had not gotten around to ironing them.” He said: “You know, Ms. Seetahal, that is not right.” I said: “My Lord, I am afraid I do not have a wife like you.” That is the point; these great men rely on their wives to significantly, if not mostly, contribute to their greatness. If we are talking about, say naming the Noor Hassanali Hall of Justice, one might contemplate naming it the Zalayar Hassanali Hall of Justice, in recognition of the part that women really play, underlying all of this greatness of men, or the so-called greatness of men, which is transitory, in my respectful opinion. [*Interruption*]

Six Senators being in the Back Bench is a reflection of the farsightedness of the current President of the Republic and his good sense. But, apparently it has not passed on to the rest of the society and the still male-dominated society in material aspects, such as in naming whether it is a stadium such as Brian Lara or Ato Boldon. All of these gentlemen, of course, are people for whom I have respect. [*Interruption*] Jean Pierre got a small part of that stadium and Hasley Crawford got the stadium. That is how it goes. You have one road, Audrey Jeffers.

Sen. Assam: You have Kirton in San Fernando.

Sen. D. Seetahal SC: Who could remember that?

Sen. Assam: I did.

Sen. D. Seetahal SC: Either way you have the majority of others named after the male gender. But you take my point. Every woman sitting in this Chamber, including those ladies from the *Hansard*, will tell you what I am saying is true.

3.00 p.m.

It is true that there is little recognition in this naming of what my colleague called the symbolic gestures of gratitude by a nation—in terms of what women contribute in this society.

We have had Gene Miles, and one knows what happened to that suggestion of a symbolic gesture 20 years ago. So, imagine, just a talk of naming a statue or having a statue after Gene Miles that prompted an entire reaction, violent reaction, by a male dominated group, far less for other persons—I heard Pat Bishop, Jizelle Salandy and Anna Mahase and persons like that. I do not intend to go and name these women. Look at those five as against 25 men, but the point is, it is women who have traditionally taken the supportive role.

The Permanent Secretaries in all the ministries—I dare say, 90 per cent of them are women—are the ones on whom the Ministers depend—none of them are looking up at me, but they know that is true. Those are the ones on whom you depend to fashion your ministry—to provide you with information to assist you; and to make the ministry what it is—and were it not for them, each Minister here would know very little of his ministry.

I really do not want to belabour the point, but when I see yet another attempt—I do not mean anything critical as to my colleague's Motion, because I dare say it is well-intentioned—or another proposition to name another set of roads, buildings or whatever it is after the men of our nation, I say, what about the women. Let us name all of these things after wives of men who have achieved greatness in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Helen Drayton: Mr. President, thank you. I endorse much of what Independent Senator Gail Merhair has said. I certainly support the views of Sen. Dr. Rambachan and last, but not least, I certainly support wholeheartedly the views of our Independent Senator. Let me assure Sen. Seetahal SC that I certainly believe that is something that would be rectified in the future, because I believe that the future belongs to women. [*Desk thumping*] I say that in more ways than one.

When you consider that maybe seven out of 10 graduates from the university are women, and if you put out a job application tomorrow, nine out of 10 will be women, I have no doubt that in due time we will be in a position to formulate the type of policies that will give due recognition to women.

Mr. President, I speak on this Motion to make a few points which I feel are relevant in the context of today's society; socially, economically and politically. We are speaking about establishing monuments to pay tribute to four distinguished citizens: Sir Ellis Clarke, Mr. ANR Robinson, the late Justice Noor Hassanali and Mr. George Chambers and I certainly feel that, yes, it is long overdue that we pay tribute in a very substantial way to these citizens.

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Let me emphasize that while we speak of establishing physical monuments—be they roads or airports as the case might be—speaking very frankly to my mind, whilst these are appropriate ways of giving recognition, I do not believe that they are necessarily the substantial way by which we should be paying tribute to these distinguished gentlemen. What will be substantial, I think, is that continuous and systematic thought and analysis of their contributions, through a body of studies in the syllabus of our primary, secondary and tertiary educational establishments which will span the fields of the humanities and social sciences whether it is civics, social studies, history, political science, law, geography or economics. These citizens in the context of their contributions span all of these fields.

Let it be a situation where our children and our grandchildren know who they are and know what their contributions have been to our society. So to honour our achievers, certainly, is to record our history, and to record our history is to have a solid foundation. They are not only persons whom we admire but, certainly, persons who are our heroes and our mentors who have exhibited on the stage of our country virtues and attributes which we need to focus on today.

Firstly, when I thought of this Motion and the events over the past couple of years in Trinidad and Tobago and the events today, I just wondered whether, in fact, such contributions would be lost and we would end up trivializing the contributions of these honourable gentlemen. But when I thought deeper and considered their very character I thought, in fact, it is the type of distraction that we need at this time, whether it is the humility, the charity, the integrity and the gentility of Justice Noor Hassanali; whether it is the intellectualism, the oratory, the integrity, the fortitude, the generosity, forthrightness and nobility of Sir Ellis Clarke; the courage, the fortitude, the determination, the integrity, the leadership and the inspiration of Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson and, of course, the dedication, the commitment, the pragmatism, the integrity—and I keep coming back to that word "integrity"—and the loyalty of George Chambers and, of course, their virtues, all underscored by high ethical conduct; attributes that we need to focus on today. This is why roads are okay, airports are okay and such physical structures are okay, but I feel that it goes deeper than that.

Let us reflect on the fact, that while they believed in democratic governance, they promoted moral authority to govern as the essence of democracy. [Desk *thumping*] So at the time of frenzied feeding, let us reflect on their contributions and the type of nation that we want to be. Let us most of all understand that humility, intelligence, cooperation and benevolence—attributes that are not manifested in what we do; what we give to society; and what we build for society, but how we go about doing it.

Let me say, Mr. President, that I commend Sen. Merhair for bringing this Motion. And while I agree that we must honour these four outstanding heroes, I do not think it is appropriate, for instance, to change the name Churchill Roosevelt Highway and I would tell you why. We are not just an island onto ourselves, we are not somewhere in Mars, but we are part of this world. Were it not for Churchill and Roosevelt, the course of our history and the world history would have been different. Indeed, we might have been subjected to a fate worse than colonialism. So, I do not think that we should trifle with history, no more than we should trifle with the name, the very colonialism. It is part and parcel of our foundation.

I also feel that—it is where I should say I have to agree with Sen. Dr. Rambachan—we need a systematic framework; we need a proper policy. It is why I do not believe that we should be giving the same type of awards that we give to Sir Ellis Clarke and to ANR Robinson—people who have been tried and tested on the rocky path of nationhood over all the years of their lives—to award them the same way, you will be showing gratitude to our sportsmen, sportswomen and beauty queens who have achieved and brought us recognition, but they have not been tried and tested in the building of nationhood over a period of time.

Mr. President, let me add another word of commendation. I think, yes, after all, the Motion is quite timely given all that is happening. I do believe that we must find a way of paying our respect and showing the gratitude to Sir Ellis Clarke, Mr. ANR Robinson, the late Justice Noor Hassanali and Mr. George Chambers.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Health (Sen. Wesley George): Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this conversation this afternoon on the Motion brought forward by Sen. Merhair. I must say that when I was asked to speak on the Motion, I was a bit in space, because I was not exactly sure what angle to take and what exactly I am going to talk about. So, I took the decision that I would wait and see where exactly the goodly Senator is going to take us with this Motion, and to listen to some of the comments on the other side before I craft my contribution this afternoon.

One of the things that came to mind whilst listening to the contributions from hon. Senators is that I was reminded of a bit of advice that was given to me in my school days and that is in order for anyone, as a principle, to be successful in our future endeavours, we must honour and pay homage to those who went before us,

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in spite of our emotional feelings towards them. As a matter of principle, if we are to be successful, we must stop and reflect and give honour to them for their service and the role that they played in the development of our country in order for us, as a people, to continue to build and move our country forward in a manner that we feel is just and truly reflects the country or the people that make up Trinidad and Tobago. It is in that light, I would like to engage us this afternoon on some of the discussions that often surround this whole topic of honouring persons who we feel should be honoured and be given gestures of gratefulness, for those in society who some may feel are deserving and who some may feel are not so deserving.

What comes to mind and what have been some of the discussions I have heard over the years are: Do we honour a single achievement—a one-time one-off achievement—or do we honour a lifetime of service? I think that is one of the things that came out in the discussion so far. Do we honour Sir Ellis Clarke in the same way that we honour a sportsman who would have had a one-time achievement?

3.15 p.m.

What exactly are you saying to those looking on and to the young people? Is it to say that it is all right for me to make a grand effort at something or should I seek to build a career, build a life, and it is on that basis I would be honoured? So I think we need to be very clear and very careful when we really give these accolades.

Another thing for us to consider is—and again, these are conversations that I would have heard in passing—how do you honour someone who—that was their job—was functioning in a position? Or, should we be honouring or clearly identifying persons who went far beyond the service? Because from time to time that happens. The last time I would have heard it was for the President's Award a few years back, around that time again when the conversation comes up.

We need to have—and I would agree with Sen. Dr. Rambachan—a clear framework to define exactly, very clearly, some guidelines and some rubrics for honouring persons for exceptional service at a particular job.

Finally, around those conversations that would come up from time to time is essentially, how do we honour our youth; those young people, especially in the field of sports, music, young persons who would have done extremely well in their young days? In a very interesting conversation—because even engaging Sen. Nicholson-Alfred before—I heard the story of Claude Noel, and my

understanding is, this was the argument they were saying, in his younger days he was an extremely good boxer and they named the highway after him, but some persons are of the view that perhaps—when you look at his life, he has some problems in his own personal life—that may not be the kind of character you may want to put up on a pedestal for your youth to emulate. It is a risk you run sometimes when you seek to honour young people in their youth in a particular way and not too sure exactly what kind of legacy they are going to leave for us to follow.

So, in a sense, these are some of the conversations that come up from time to time. I think we need to create a framework for them to be properly distilled, taking into consideration and for us to be absolutely clear as to what exactly are we honouring.

With respect to the gentlemen before us today in my mind, we are indeed honouring a lifetime of service. We are honouring, not simply what was done, but in my mind, as a young person, when you look at the circumstance in which these gentlemen operated, one has to ask what was the motive, what was the driver that caused these gentlemen to go far and beyond what was required of them to lend service to their country? Not only that, there was a particular period in the 70s where you would find a whole host of persons going far and beyond—there was clearly something other than money driving it. Clearly, there was something other than fame that was propelling these persons to propel themselves.

Even, the little I would have known or read of some of these persons, fame was not the driver. The driver was, in my mind, national pride. The driver was a sense of selflessness that propelled them to go far and beyond knowing that these people, my country needs me to go this extra mile, that I have the capacity to do it and I am the one must take the responsibility to do what must be done because my countryman needs it.

We have to ask ourselves amongst the young population today, do we see that? In our country today, really, is that the real driver that drives persons toward success and exemplary service? And I think how we honour these persons must clearly reflect that attribute, service to country; selfless service to country.

Mr. President, I think once we can set up some sort of framework to clearly articulate that, to clearly put that on a pedestal, then we may begin to see a change, perhaps, in some of the attitudes of our young people as it relates to selfless service, community service, doing things for free, understanding and appreciating, embracing this whole notion of national pride. And I really believe that this, indeed, is a timely debate, because in a time where, I think, our young

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people need to see heroes on a national level, we need to find a way even now amongst the present crop of leaders, not only within the Parliament, not only within the politics, but all spheres of national life. We need to begin to start advancing, showing, promoting and honouring leaders of today with the kind of character, with the kind of drive of some of these leaders of yesterday.

I believe and I know that they are there, but they may not be in position for us to really see them, as Sen. Dr. Rambachan had articulated before. They are the ones who may be working tirelessly in the villages, they are the ones who may be working tirelessly within communities and as a result the national population—though the value of their contribution may be lost to the national population. For example, especially in small villages when the heroes within communities do well, the tendency—and that is my experience growing up in Fyzabad—is once they start to do well, they move out. They win an award and they move up to town; they get on the national football team and they move out.

What happens is that, “us” the young people who have to stay in the community, do not benefit from their lives. We do not get to see them on an everyday basis. How do they interact with people on the field? We do not get to see them in their family life and as a result of that you have a crop of young people who will do well. They will do well in business, they will do well in sports, they will do well in these areas, because this is what they see, this is what they see them being honoured for and as a result of that they would lack in all the other areas. They may not put a lot of emphasis on the family life, they may not put other emphasis on all the other areas of life that are just as important to developing a country and just as important in carrying on the legacy of a nation.

Really, that is what these four men here exemplified. They were not only heroes in their profession, but these men were heroes or showed those same qualities in all aspects of their lives and they did it in a way that the whole country could see and all the young people of that era could have taken note and fashion their own lives in that same manner.

So, I would like to, in closing, thank Sen. Merhair, for this timely Motion. However, I would also like to say that we would like to support the Motion in principle, however, we are unable to support its present wording in terms of the immediate steps, simply because we would rather some sort of consultation or allow us the time to think about it a bit to see if we should put something in place as has been recommended here, some sort of committee, a policy, something like that. However, in its present wording we are unable to support the Motion as, I say, the immediate steps.

But nevertheless I would like to thank the Senator for this Motion as it has caused us to reflect, in this time, where public figures, the lives and integrity of all of us can be called into question at anytime. The population is looking at us in that way to reflect on some of our heroes, so that even myself, can look at these gentlemen and remind myself as far as to, what really is the bar, what is the standard for national service, so that I may seek to emulate, in some way, the kind of service that Trinidad and Tobago requires and has grown used to.

Mr. President: Senator, before you totally wind-up, and having heard your contribution, is it that you wish to amend the Motion slightly, because I heard a speaker on the Independent Bench having an issue with one of the recommendations.

Therefore is it that you want to propose that the Government consider renaming rather than take immediate steps. Because if that is the case then I suggest that you move that amendment, have it seconded or put it forward and then, at least it is out there and we would take a vote on both the original and the amendment, and we would see which way it goes. Would you like to do that?

Sen. W. George: Yes, Mr. President.

Mr. President: Well, then do it!

Sen. W. George: Mr. President, I would like to converse with my leader and we can circulate it during the debate.

Mr. President: Very well. Once you take your seat you would have taken your seat, but we can get someone else to move the amendment.

Sen. Verna St. Rose Greaves: Mr. President, as I rise I want to honour and pay homage to my ancestors upon whose shoulders I stand.

I simply want to pose one or two questions on this Motion. The first question is, would the late President Noor Hassanali want his name to be associated with a Hall of Justice that denies access to the disabled? [*Desk thumping*]

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Would the late President, knowing that George Daniel of Disabled People's International, brought a court action, won the court action, and since 2007 no steps have been made or taken, save and except being told that it was put out to tender. So, George Daniel, the little giant and his constituency of disabled people still cannot gain access to the Hall of Justice. That is one of my questions.

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3.30 p.m.

The second question is on the former President, ANR Robinson of Tobago. I do not feel comfortable sitting here and taking a decision for Tobago, how we should name Tobago's airport or after whom we should name Tobago's airport. I certainly think that should be a decision and a discussion that must take place in the context of people in Tobago.

Sen. Browne: In San Fernando.

Sen. V. St. Rose Greaves: Thank you. I feel also like what Sen. Seetahal SC said, when she talked about the women who stood alongside or who stand alongside the men. For my part, I would want to believe that if we are talking about the late President Hassanali, we would certainly have to put the former First Lady right there with him because she has been exemplary as far as I am concerned. I have a lot of respect and admiration for both of them, when they were in fact the first couple of this twin island republic.

I also have a sense, that perhaps if we can create some safe, secure play spaces for children across this nation, gardens of peace, that perhaps, Mrs. Hassanali can speak on behalf of the late President, maybe much more appreciative than the Hall of Justice because we have very few, if any, safe play places for children in this country.

I also want to say that Mr. ANR—perhaps, if we can go back to reviving those abandoned estates which was such an excellent project, where those abandoned estates were revived and we had a lot of indigenous fruits, plants and environmentally sound programmes, where people were taught about the environment and preservation, so that we would not have all of these problems that we are having now with the water and so on, that we can consider.

The reason I am saying all of these things is because while I understand the sentiment of Sen. Merhair, and her need to want to do something nice, I think it has to be given much more thought. I want to support Sen. Dr. Rambachan, my colleague, when he suggested that this be put before a select committee, where we can have some consultation because we need to set up some parameters, protocol, policies, processes, in terms of how do we get consent. Have we spoken to any of these people to find out whether they would be willing to have their names appended to any of these projects? Have we consulted with their families? Have we consulted with the communities? Those are some of my concerns. I think that if we are doing that, then we can take it further where we can speak to the question of national awards. How do we give people national awards? What is the process? How transparent is it? What kind of consultation takes place?

I am saying that, because I had a really horrible experience in this country, where several years ago we almost had to pry open the fingers of a man to release a 10-year-old boy whom he was using to satisfy his sexual perversion. Later on, it was announced that this man was going to be honoured. But it was already a done deal and there was very little any of us could have done.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

I am suggesting that consultation with interest groups, with different sectors may throw out some information that would allow for us, not to embarrass people, but certainly, to understand what we do when we simply close our eyes and say, we are going to award somebody or we are going to put their name on something. So I am just asking that consultation take a priority, and that these things be above board and be as transparent as possible.

We also have a tendency to be very subjective, because if I had my way and I had to give out some awards, I would want to speak to the question of a Yorouba cemetery in Diego Martin, where we do have one which is far from sufficient for our needs; I would want to honour people like Tantie Vie and Uncle Ray in my community; Ms. Nita who fed hundreds of school children in her parlour over the years; Nurse Dalrymple the midwife. Sen. Seetahal SC was saying, and I think I heard Sen. Dr. Rambachan talked about a mid-wife who had delivered so many children. So we can be subjective, because I would have so many people that I myself will want to nominate.

I do not want to take up too much time because Trinidad and Tobago is burning as we speak. People are having problems with water, murders by the minute, the money is not there. Lots of things that must take a priority, and I think with a Motion like this, we can move to another space, situation, where people can give it the fullness of their attention, and we can come up with decisions that are best for Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to make a couple of brief points on an interesting Motion filed by my colleague, Sen. Merhair. These are just two very brief points that I think are worthy of note. I have listened to the contributions made, but the two things that strike me as odd and are missing in all of this, is one, a sense of history. I get the impression in speaking with young people, talking with people generally, that we are studying history in our schools, but I do not think our youths in particular, are endowed with an appropriate sense of history, and I think that makes for a rootless—R-O-O-T-L-E-S-S—society

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because it is very difficult for us to estimate our trajectory or even propel ourselves forward in a meaningful way if we do not know where we have come from, and we do not know a lot of things about ourselves. I suppose the History Department at the University of the West Indies, and now at the UTT, is doing some good work with some of this stuff, but it is far too little. [*Desk thumping*] You would be surprised how many things we do not know.

I am just sitting here and thinking what was the name of the ships that Columbus discovered Trinidad with.

Sen. Oudit: The Santa María.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: No, it is not the Santa María, the Pinta and the Niña. I think those were the first three ships that he embarked with on his first voyage in 1492. We were discovered in 1498 and we do not even know these details—well at least I do not—and I could not find it anywhere either. I do not know if we really have a clear, fixed in a documented way, what happened in 1990, and that was a signal event in our country's history. For that matter, I do not think we are very clear in a documented format on what happened in 1970 either, although I know that there is some research being done in that regard.

Why I find that tragic, is that we talk about honouring people, venerating the dead or living legends among us, but one of the agreements against digging into some of these things is that people forget. I find that quite laughable because there are Egyptologists that are studying what happened in Egypt, 5,000 years ago. So if something has happened here 20 or 30 years ago, I still see that as relatively recent, and there are perfectly valid methodologies to go and investigate what happened, so that the country is able to understand where we have come from. I think that this needs to be rooted better in our curricula.

I heard Sen. St. Rose Greaves talk about the fact that the people in Tobago should have the opportunity to say what Crown Point International Airport should be called. Of course, we heard, well yes, perhaps, and then what happens to the people in San Fernando and the people in Port of Spain and so on. Just sort of flipping that over in my mind, Mr. President, it occurs to me that our children in schools do not know even why the airport is called the Crown Point International Airport. We do not know why it is called the Piarco International Airport. We are suggesting here to change the name of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, but our children do not fully appreciate what Churchill and Roosevelt did to have a highway named after them. I think the point is valid, that had those men not exerted themselves when they did, we might not have the privilege of standing

here, entertaining each other, or speaking and sharing ideas as the case may be. [Laughter] So I think it is a mistake for generations to forget what generations in the past have done.

I personally do not subscribe to the view to rename things with every generation that passes. I think there is a real benefit to ensuring that our people understand how the names of those things came to be. So something needs to be done with that, and perhaps the university system, the tertiary system, and the educators among us need to think about how our children in San Fernando understand the contribution that Aleem Mohammed in S. M. Jaleel is making to business in Trinidad and Tobago, for example. How have sons of the soil from those very areas made indentations in the wider world.

That brings me to my second and final brief point, Mr. President, and that is, that somewhere inside of this—I do not know if the society is burning as Sen. St. Rose Greaves suggested it is, but certainly there seemed to have been a marked rise in incivility in the society. So we definitely have a problem relating to each other, and in some areas I think that has spiralled out of control. But if one takes the step back, you really have to ask yourself, whether we have or have lost a culture of gratitude as we did in generations before. I do not think we have the same kind of dosage of gratitude. We are not able to dole it out in the way that we used to. I think that we can routinely show discourtesy and disrespect to people who have done yeoman service to us.

I believe it is the Indo-Trinidadian community that has a term for that, but I understand from this handbook that I am not allowed to say it here. So I will abide by the rules. Maybe I could spell it. [Laughter] [Mr. President shakes his head] Sorry, I am not allowed to do that either, but I guess we all know what it is because it starts with the letter N. This notion of ungratefulness is something that we need to think about as we think about honouring people and naming things after people. We have enough things in this country that we could name something after everybody. I do not think that we need to rename anything. I think that we have enough things in here that we can name after people, but that is not the point. The point is: Are we bringing up our people to be grateful to those who have gone before; to appreciate the hard work that people have done? It is a developing country, so you know what, it will never be perfect. That is the whole point of development, it is not perfect. It is a work in progress.

When we are developed then we would be able to say ‘we reach’, ‘we are perfect’, and we will want to tell the rest of the world how to do it. That is fine, but we are not yet there. So while we are on this journey, I think it is important for

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us to take the opportunity to remind ourselves and particularly our children, the importance of gratitude, because I do not see how we could have truly loyal citizens if we do not have grateful ones.

Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

3.45 p.m.

Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight: Mr. President, I thank the mover of this Motion for giving us the space to consider our national approach to recognizing the sacrifice that some of our countrymen make on our behalf and to think for a while on whether we do show appreciation, and if so, how appropriate is the appreciation that we do show. I have listened attentively to the debate so far and I agree with a lot of what has been said. I want to balance the picture a bit.

This Motion deals specifically with four of our icons; three of them have been recognized with the nation's highest honour, which was, at the time, the Trinity Cross. Over the years, both in and out of office, they have also been celebrated by different civic groups. I recall that not too long ago a Bill came to this Parliament seeking to improve the standard of living of our former Head of State. Even though the Bill was passed unanimously, I have to admit that I was considerably taken aback by some of the questions and concerns that were raised in that debate. [*Interruption*] That goes specifically to how we as a people celebrate our own and appreciate their sacrifices. [*Desk thumping*] That is all well and good, but we are a young nation and we do need to start thinking of how we are going to create our history. How are we going to have these exemplars remembered by successive generations in a real way?

When our Head of State dies, it is normal to offer a state funeral and then they are allowed to fade into discreet oblivion. This Motion suggests that we immortalize them on highways and buildings, but I want to point out to this honourable House that if any of us were to take God out of our thoughts and ask most Trinidadians, age 50 and under: What is the significance of Woodford Street, Abercromby Street, Hart Street, Chacon Street and Picton Street? "They in Port of Spain;" end of story. That is part of our history. Do we want 50 years from now, the same thing to happen to George Chambers Boulevard and Sir Ellis Clarke Trace? No; I personally have too much respect for these people for this.

Mr. President, the same thing is the case with the Solomon Hochoy Highway and the Uriah Butler Highway, even though the name of Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler, is continually in the news with trade union and labour matters. Look at what happened when Diamond Boulevard was renamed Wendy Fitzwilliams, they

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had to change that sign at various times, because the community did not want it. [Interruption] Nobody else in the community objected; they allowed it to be defaced.

I do not think that given nowadays the road rage and carnage that happen on our roads, we want to inflict that on anybody who served us with distinction. No, we have got to do better than that.

We have heard suggestions today; buildings? Come on. Given our, I should say, ingrained distaste for maintenance, do you want to put the names of your icons on buildings that you know you are not putting money in the estimates to maintain? Who are we fooling? I think that is equally hazardous.

Let me talk for a moment about our Heads of Government. This is a country where when you become a head of government you are fair game for every kind of comedy and disrespect in life. We have gone so far as to have our instructions come from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to missions abroad, in one administration, instructing us to remove the portraits of former Heads of Government and Heads of State from the missions.

Sen. Piggott: What a disgrace!

Sen. Assam: It is your Government that did it.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: No, yours. [Loud uproar] [Laughter]

I think that these are the sorts of things that we have to be careful to ensure they never happen again. Our first premiere and Prime Minister was very specific in stating that he wanted no national honour, no building named after him. What did we do and what did we accept as a country, without murmur? A financial complex and a problem ridden medical complex. I guess this is a manifestation of the fact that we are a very complex people.

Our other deceased Prime Minister, George Chambers, has been allowed to, really and truly, rest in peace. There is nothing to remind us of him, but now we want a traffic congested road to put his name on. My God, when will the disrespect end? Can we do no better than that? A self-made national who achieved the highest position in the country, endured all sorts of disrespect in life, but still looked upon as someone who contributed with dignity and mightily to the country, and you want people to sit in their car and "cuss" him on a road in Port of Spain? No, let us not think of that.

Let us instead think of, perhaps, using the same committee that now recommends national awards; expand their mandate and let them come up with a proper

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[SEN. BAPTISTE-MC KNIGHT]

protocol for honouring nationals, persons who contribute to the national good, such as sportsmen. Let us stop the "ad hocism". You had the Soca Warriors, who heightened our profile in Germany and were rewarded with \$1 million and national medals. They, as we like to say, "put us on the map"; I do not know where we were before, but this is what is understood in this country, "They put us on the map", so they were rewarded. But last year we had a cricket team that left here; they went and put us on another map because they came second, and up to now—it might be my fault, because I have not been very diligent in my research—I am not aware that they got any reward. They never even got funding to go.

Sen. Browne: They were funded.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: No, no, no; the Cricket Association was given its normal subvention, out of which they could have chosen to.

Sen. Browne: It was paid for by the league; it is a professional cricket team.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: The Indian chicken farmer who sponsored them—

Sen. Browne: With respect; it was a professional cricket league; that means it was done for money. The reality is that the transportation fees were paid for by the team that sponsored them. To be a sponsor in that particular league, you had to pay into the league and not to the team. It is being run on a professional, cash basis, so there was no room or capacity for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to finance the team to go, per se. It was being paid for by the league.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: I thank the hon. Minister for trying to defend the indefensible.

Sen. Browne: That is not the point.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: The point I am trying to make is that throughout the world, wherever that was beamed, they were represented as a Trinidad and Tobago team. We accepted them as a Trinidad and Tobago team and they wore our colours with grace and success.

Sen. Browne: Agreed.

Sen. C. Baptiste-Mc Knight: They did get something; they got a parade in Chaguanas. A private enterprise, done very privately. This is not good enough; it says that we do not know how to honour our people when they do honours to us.

My submission is that this Motion gives us the opportunity to rethink this entire situation. It gives us the opportunity to think that, perhaps, we can give

former Prime Minister Chambers, posthumously—I was just about to say the Trinity Cross—the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, if he had not instructed his heirs not to accept it. It says to us that we do not need to replace road signs and paint new names on buildings. We have a former Prime Minister whom we recognize as the father of the country, a committed national and an internationally acclaimed scholar. We have three universities and we cannot find the money to endow a chair in economics or in political science in his name? Surely this is not beyond us.

All I am asking is that we give a little thought to the matter and see if, perhaps, we can come up with some means of really celebrating these people and immortalizing their contributions in a fashion that would redound to our credit and their glory.

4.00 p.m.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I would like to thank Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight for making several points which would have actually been included in the course of my own discussion. When we debated this matter at caucus yesterday, whilst we understand the sentiments which drove the approach of Sen. Gail Merhair in putting forward this Motion, we had a number of other ideas and that is one of the reasons my colleague today indicated that he would like to move an amendment to this Motion.

Many things have been said today that are true and which have far-reaching implications which require a considered thought and perhaps the articulation of something that is stronger than just simply the honouring of four sons of the soil who have all made serious and strong contributions to the lifeblood of this country. And it is perhaps fitting as we remember the anniversary of the "Father of our Nation", Eric Williams, that we should today consider how best we honour and recognize the contributions that had been made by those who have gone before us—in the poetic words of Sen. St. Rose-Greaves—"standing on the shoulders of our ancestors".

Today, we have all talked about a sense of nationalism, a sense of pride of country, of self-worth, a sense of identification, of a way that we would seek to incorporate perhaps the words given to us by our "Founding Father": discipline, production and tolerance into the fabrics of our lives as we recognize that in making a country there are many sides that must be considered and deliberated

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on, and ideas and lessons learnt from those who have gone before us. And we must find a way not simply to reward them, or demonstrate gratitude, but also a way to promulgate their ideas, to promote their work in a way that enlivens, enriches us and makes the country proud of itself and for being itself.

Those are the ideas I think that are incorporated in many of the contributions that were made today. We talked about the issue of consultation, what is right and just, what is fitting, whether we should put a name on a busy road, or on a street, what else is proper and it really speaks to the issue of policy and a way of being that, as a country, we must come to recognize, question and seek ways in which we must improve.

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight spoke about our congenital incapacity to maintain—she did not use that phrase, but I think it suggests—

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: That is the phrase you used? Yours was better? But it is certainly something we need to talk about as we seek not merely to—sometimes people talk about 2020 vision as though it is a catchword, just a marketing phrase and perhaps the purpose of that phrase is to help our vision to rise a bit, help us to move beyond some of the details that sometimes bog us down and keep us from moving forward to a vision of success. [*Interruption*]

It is a reality. As you well know, Sen. Assam, success is a destination, a goal that constantly moves and you must constantly work towards it. And just to borrow from Shakespeare: "What is in a word?" And the answer is everything. It is about our history, it is about everything that has gone before us and there are some serious difficulties even when we seek to rename that which exists.

If we were just to take some simple examples as we seek to create a path for ourselves moving forward, let us think of our history. I think the point which Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight made was: Does anybody remember who Picton was, who Woodford was? Or for that matter, sometimes the rich tapestry of our framework for example, look at St. James where every street is named after Ganges, Bombay, Calcutta, Ranjit Kumar. Every street has an Indian designation and it is reflective of how St. James grew up.

In the same way, for example, in Petit Valley which reflects a contribution which was made by a part of our modern history, which was built by the Jewish community: Chuma Monka Avenue, President Weizman Avenue, David Ben Gurion Avenue. A whole series of names which, whilst not indigenous to

Trinidad and Tobago do reflect a contribution, a fact that they themselves were basking in the glory of the success of a new nation state as it came and their history as they themselves ran away from the travails of Europe.

Or for that matter Woodbrook, let us talk about Woodbrook. It was in fact a wood with a brook running through it and when it rains and we have the huge downpours, the western part of the savannah gets flooded and nobody ever wonders why. The answer is that was the natural course of the river and it ran right down Cipriani Boulevard; if you go there when the rains come down in torrents, there are some days you cannot pass.

It never used to be like that when I was a little boy growing up; it is because we have denuded the hills and put houses there. So in some instances when it rains you can get almost 8 inches of water above the level of the pavement because that is the natural level of the watercourse. In fact, the biggest drain in Port of Spain is on Cipriani Boulevard. So it was a wood brook and a wood brook that became developed over time and the names of the streets recognize the history of its earliest inhabitants and owners: Gallus, Petra, Cornelio, Ana, Carlos, Murray; the children of the Siegert family.

In the same way that it also reflects our colonial heritage: Belle Smythe, Roberts, Pole Carew, Mac Donald, Methuen, all generals in the Boer Wars on the side of the English. Not necessarily what we may want to remember, but very much part of our colonial past.

Similarly, Federation Park, modern history but reflects a certain naming in convention. It reflects the fact that we were the headquarters of the Federation. That is why it took on the names of all the various islands, all the various countries that became part of the Federation. So names do have a history, and we do lose our history if we do not remember or write it and that speaks a different form of scholarship.

I take the point that in terms of our history and recognizing ourselves for who we are, where we have come from needs a wider dissemination and readership. Not simply the fact that we do not write, but for those who do write, we need to re-read them and remember what we are about.

So this debate raises a number of issues and even as we speak, what are the naming conventions that are being used for the new housing settlements that are being built? Flora and fauna of Trinidad and Tobago. If we go back to one with which I am familiar which is the D'Abadie Development which was built in the early 1980s; each street is named after a flower that is native to Trinidad and Tobago.

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Or in the case of Diamond Vale, Emerald Drive but they reflect certain types of names which are part and parcel of our history. So even in the question of renaming what we have, we need to think of what we are doing to our history and what we remember of ourselves.

Clearly, if there is nothing else, the course of this debate raises a number of policy issues. What will you use to commemorate? Will it be a building, a road; what type of road, what level? In fact, there is a naming convention as we speak which exists at the level of local government and I thought Sen. Dr. Rambachan may have raised that issue.

In fact, the local corporations do have the capacity to change names without so much as a “by your leave;” I think with simple reference to the Ministry of Local Government. They inform the Ministry of Local Government—that is all they do—and adopt names, give names to streets. One of the other things that happens, of course, is that we also name places after people who have been associated with them.

Sen. Dr. Rambachan: Senator, there is consultation with the community before any street is named, or any street name is changed and unless there is consensus, the local government, at least in my time, did not make any changes.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: I am sure that is what you did, but there is no policy. It is not consistent.

Sen. Dr. Rambachan: In the current Act there are sections which speak about how streets should be named.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: I thank you for that correction. The reality is, I think it is clear that as we speak, the issue about this Motion and it is important insofar as it makes us think of ourselves, where we are and where we are going. It needs to be changed a bit, not that I want to pour cold water on the idea of recognizing, memorizing or paying homage or tribute to the persons who are mentioned here; Ellis Clarke, Noor Hassanali, Arthur Robinson or George Chambers. Quite the opposite. I fully endorse and recognize the sentiments which brought this Motion and I endorse those ideas, but I think certainly, the level of conversation has evinced the need for a wider policy position, a wider look at what we do and how we move forward, insofar as to devise a policy to consider what we should name, how we should name, what conventions we should use, what should be appropriate.

For example, in some countries, people are not honoured in this particular fashion, as a rule, until after they are dead for several different reasons. One of the

reasons you mentioned that in their living lifetime some other things may have happened that you will not know, so there is always the benefit of hindsight after death to do the type of due diligence and investigation that would forestall any difficulties in terms of the national psyche in making those types of mistakes.

So certainly, there is need for a policy which should consider how we treat with streets, how we treat with municipal buildings, parks, cemeteries, cadastral names and how we treat with an area. What conventions, what names should follow that, or for example, what principle we should have for geographic names. This is in the future moving forward, this is not to say that we would necessarily want to rename existing places, but I am sure that will come up.

Do you, for example, have a name for a particular geographical region and do things fall under the rubric of that particular name? All different sorts of areas along those lines, and we do have areas where people's names are given to the area. For example, one of the things I always had difficulty in understanding, I never knew where Macaulay was. It is only when I saw it in writing that I knew it as Mc Caulay, some people call it "Macoolay".

Similarly, in order to prevent certain errors creeping in, should we have, for example, a policy of name reservation keeping certain types of buildings, or certain types of names out of the public domain? For example, for those of us who look at the Internet, there are some jokes that come around where, for example, there are certain cities in different languages where the names would have some unfortunate translations or pronunciations in the English language. So you want to ensure that you find a mechanism to ensure that some names do not creep into the business of attaching a name.

4.15 p.m.

Or for that matter, the issues of the methodology or the approval process to be used for granting a name or for a particular area, especially given the fact that there may be local sensitivities or sensibilities, as was identified by Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight in one particular instance. Surely we will all agree—and I think that there is general consensus—that the naming of the various football stadia after the names of certain, if you want, current sporting icons, was acceptable. But by the same token, there may be situations in which people may have felt that that was not sufficient, and there is always a case for somebody else. Why did we put somebody else in and leave somebody else out? Why did we use Jean Pierre, for example, as distinct from using the administrator, Lystra Lewis? Why? Because Jean Pierre, Lystra Lewis, if you want—

Sen. Mark: A guru.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Well, Lystra Lewis was the guru; Jean Pierre was the student. We named the netball courts after her; the Lystra Lewis Courts. We named it in her lifetime. We named the Jean Pierre Complex in Jean Pierre's lifetime. There are no more Lystra Lewis Courts, but there still continues to be a Jean Pierre Complex. So you end up with certain, if you want, egregious breaches of policy in that regard and you would want to find a way so that we would be able to deal with it on the continuous basis rather than on an ad hoc position.

Let us just recognize these four. The answer is: what about the people who come afterwards? What will we have for them? What do we want to do in terms of a reservation of place names? There is the example in the case after JFK's death that they, literally, in some places in North America, everything was named after JFK. They have plenty JFKs. JFK this, JFK that. And there is that sort of difficulty as well. So you want to ensure that you do not end up with a plethora of like names. There is a St. Vincent Street in Tunapuna; there is a St. Vincent Street in Port of Spain; there is a St. Vincent Street in San Fernando. St. Vincent Street is one of the most popular names, actually. There are about five or six different St. Vincent Streets or Church Street, for that matter.

Then there are the financial implications. Who is going to pay for it, in terms of the regional corporation, the local government body, the national body? How should it be dealt with? Also too, the naming of the procedure; there are several different ways in which you could set things out; also, too, the policy of consultation.

So from our perspective, we think that the debate has been useful in generating a relook at what, perhaps, we have taken for granted; what we, perhaps, have not spent enough time with and enough due deliberation for. So perhaps one way to deal with that would be to suggest instead that the resolution should be:

Be it resolved that the Government create a policy for the naming of public places and to provide a procedure for the naming of public places.

That could probably be one amendment that could be made to the resolution and I would so recommend.

With those few words, I thank you.*[Desk thumping]*

Sen. Mervyn Assam: Mr. President, I wanted to rise to make a certain clarification on a statement that Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight made. One got the distinct impression—and, of course, I enjoyed the laugh like every other

Senator, particularly on the opposite side—when she said it was your government. And one got the distinct impression that it might have been the Government of the United National Congress. She further clarified that to me, that it was in 1987 that a circular was sent out by the government of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, stating what she said.

However, I was not part of the Government, although I was a member of the party. I held the position then, as the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and I never received such circular and I can tell you during the three years that I stayed at that post, 1987 to 1990, every High Commissioner, starting with Sir Learie Constantine right down to your humble servant's picture was on that wall; every head of state, starting with Sir Solomon Hochoy right down to Noor Hassanali, was on that wall, and every Prime Minister, starting with the hon. Dr. Eric Williams, right down to ANR Robinson, was on that wall. And when I left in 1990, it was still there.

But when I returned several times afterwards, or more particularly, when I was Foreign Minister in 2001, all those photographs had remained intact in the Embassy or in the Chancery of the High Commission for Trinidad and Tobago in London.

Thank you, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight: Mr. President, just let me clarify. It was not a written circular. It was a telephone communication between the Minister and the ambassador, preparing for a visit from the Prime Minister and the Minister. Thank you.

Sen. Gail Merhair: Mr. President, thank you very much. I think in a very long time, our Private Members' Motion day has not been as interesting and spirited as it has been today. [*Desk thumping*] You know, when I was doing research on this debate, I think I came out of the post-independence/pre-republic era and I think that having been born in that era, I got a history lesson from some of my colleagues in the Chamber today. I am, indeed, grateful for that history lesson that I got from both my colleagues on this side of the Bench, on the Opposition Bench and my colleagues on the Government Bench. So I want to thank you very much for that.

I would like to thank my hon. colleague, Sen. Dana Seetahal SC for her contribution that she has made today and I would like to say I hope that the challenge right now is out for all those strong ladies who are in position, that we look forward, that one day, perhaps, we will have a female President and a female

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Prime Minister. So the time will come when Sen. Seetahal SC can say, indeed, women have, in fact, reached the pinnacle of success and we can now celebrate that.

But be that as it may, my Motion dealt with the facts of four honoured and distinguished gentlemen who have, in fact, served this nation with distinction and I must say that I think that listening to all sides, I am, indeed, pleased to see that this debate has stimulated a lot of interesting comments and suggestions and recommendations as it should have, to honour these four distinguished gentlemen.

I would gladly accept Government's intention of amending my Motion as suggested by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the hon. Mariano Browne, to accept the amendment proposed by the Government; that the Government will, indeed, execute consultation and a wider policy on not only honouring these distinguished gentlemen but other members who have served us well.

Mr. President, with that, I beg—

Mr. President: Do not move anything just yet, because if you do then I have to put that question and if I put that question I do not know where it will go. I understand that the Government does wish to amend—apparently you are amenable to an amendment. Therefore, what I would suggest is that we suspend for the tea break; get the wording of the amendment out and when we resume at 5.00 p.m., someone on the Government Bench will put the amendment.

Now, let me just advise you, the amendment has got to be done in two parts. We either have to, depending on exactly what the amendment is, first of all, remove certain words; whatever it is that you want removed, and then insert words. We have to take two votes on it. Okay? So that is how it is actually done. So we will remove whatever words you wish to remove and then we will insert the new words, whatever it is. If it is that the entire resolution is to be deleted, we have to put that question first and then the new Motion. If that passes, then that is the Motion and that is the question that I will put. You can second the amendment and I will then put the question and I would be grateful if somebody would ensure that I have the wording of the question that I could put it correctly at that time.

So we will suspend this sitting until 5.00 p.m. for the tea break. The sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.26 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

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Sen. G. Merhair: Mr. President, I beg to move that the Motion be amended by leaving out the words after the word "Government" and inserting the words "consider creating a policy for the naming of public places".

Sen. Enill: I beg to second the amendment.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the question is that the Motion be amended by leaving out the words after the word "Government".

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the question is that the Motion be amended further by inserting the words "consider creating a policy for the naming of public places" after the word "Government".

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, on amended motion, put and agreed to.

Be it Resolved:

That the Government consider creating a policy for the naming of public places.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Monday, March 29, 2010 at 1.30 p.m., when we would deal with the Civil Aviation (Amdt.) Bill, Chap. 49:03 and begin the debate on an Act to establish the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority and for matters related thereto. We do not expect it would be completed and we would like to return on Wednesday, March 31 at 10.00 a.m.

We would also advise that the Bill that would be debated thereafter, because it requires some speed, is Bill No. 3, an Act to amend various Acts.

Housing Development Corporation (Allegations of Corruption)

Sen. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan: I thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to debate the failure of the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment to take appropriate measures to deal with allegations of the existence of large-scale corruption at the Housing Development Corporation.

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[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Over the years, we have been hearing from citizens seeking public housing through the then NHA and now the Housing Development Corporation, that they have to bribe officials of the NHA or their representatives for a house.

In the *Trinidad Guardian* of Wednesday, March 03, 2010, the front page headline screamed at us in bold yellow and red: “‘Bobol’ halts HDC projects”. We all know what “bobol” means. It is the local expression for corruption. In the article on page 3, the hon. Prime Minister blames corruption and poor workmanship for HDC’s housing projects being halted. The Prime Minister was probably very correct in saying what he did because he is the guardian of the public purse and has to guard it on behalf of the public.

The author of this story is a reporter named Reshma Ragoonath, who was covering a walkabout by the Prime Minister in Princes Town North, when residents cried out for housing, only to be told by the Prime Minister, in reference to why they had to stop the programme—I am quoting from the newspaper—said:

"We have had to pause to do that. I have to say it, in the HDC there are a lot of hard working public officers and there are a few who are corrupt, we also have that, and they have been making \$5,000 and \$10,000 on housing, all I can say in terms of that (is) we are making some headway."

Mr. Vice-President, this of course is an admission that there are corrupt people within the HDC. For the Prime Minister to say that he was making some headway, we hope that something will be done. But this matter of corruption goes quite a long way back and one wonders why it took the Prime Minister so long to intervene where the public purse was being frittered away by corrupt individuals. Not only that, members of the public were also being violated.

It is one form of corruption where citizens have to pay a bribe to get a house. There are four pillars of democracy in my view: the right to shelter; the right to education; the right to free speech; and the right to good health. When any one of those pillars of democracy is affected, democratic traditions and a person's rights are also affected. While it is one form of corruption for citizens to pay a bribe to get a house, another form of corruption has to do with what the Prime Minister admitted—that houses were also being poorly constructed.

The admission is supported by the new Chief Executive Officer, the very efficient, Miss Jearlean John who, in the *Trinidad Guardian* of the same day, also said that the suspension of the new housing projects was a necessary step to ensure quality control. What does she mean by quality control?

It seems to me that corruption is double in terms of what is happening here, and maybe even triple. Firstly, you have to pay a bribe for a house. Secondly, you get a house that is poorly constructed, which you then have to fix, as we are seeing in so many HDC estates where people move into their houses and they are not properly done. There are leaks, cracks; all kinds of problems. So they pay a bribe and then you get a poorly-constructed house.

Thirdly, in terms of Miss John's statement on quality control, there is the inefficiency and mismanagement that allows contractors to bleed the system at the expense of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the HDC. In fact, I am told that there is a 30 per cent increase in the cost in construction because of poor quality and poor workmanship. Mismanagement sometimes equates with corruption; it is sometimes a nice term to cover corruption.

Why are contractors being allowed to deliver poorly-constructed houses? I believe it has to do with the procurement system, which, as I understand it, is not in keeping with the standards set by the Government as defined by the Ministry of Finance. It seems to me that contractors are having a free-for-all. The corruption on the part of contractors is manifested by the leeway that is granted to contractors to procure and use material. There are no checks and balances because the ratio of project managers to projects is deficient. There are many more projects than the number of project managers at the HDC can handle; the contractors are not properly monitored; the inventory of things they bring to put into the building is not properly monitored and, especially in terms of toilet seats. They are putting in much lower cost seats than they are supposed to put in. The situation has to do with how the HDC is organized to administer these projects.

As I understand it, contractors are being hired to build houses on sites without responsibility for roads and drains. Houses are being built and they cannot be delivered. Because they cannot be delivered, the houses are subject to acts of vandalism and remedial work then has to be done at excessive cost. You and I know that it is sometimes much more expensive to repair a house than to build one. This, too, is corruption. This, too, is mismanagement. Corruption, I argue, is not just about bribery; but also mismanagement. Let me give an example.

To the Carlsen Field Project, which is supposed to be a four-year project, the Government has committed \$689 million and they have discovered now that the statutory requirements have not been fulfilled and there are no other kinds of approvals. Now they have to go back and spend money to do the plans and so on to get the approvals; a back-to-front way of doing things; and the contractors are having a field day.

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Mr. Vice-President, as I understand it, mismanagement breeds corruption and it is being seen in the HDC in terms of the fees of architects, quantity surveyors and hired project managers. The HDC has to step in and do something about this corruption. The fees of the professionals are tied to the cost of the architects, quantity surveyors and so on. As costs go up, the fees go up and the cost may go up simply because prices of goods may be going up; not necessarily the work to be done.

The delays that are caused by poor planning, inadequate evaluation of sites, bad designs also cause substantial delays and cost overruns and when fees are based on cost, there is every reason for unethical professionals to skim the cream, benefiting from these loose arrangements.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is true that a project management firm is being paid fees of \$200,000 per month for the Victoria Keyes project in Diego Martin, which is over budget and way behind schedule.

Mr. Vice-President, I understand also that the corruption is being funnelled and facilitated by a system called confirmatory orders where a project manager can go to a supplier of materials and order, on the account of the HDC, without approval. If that is true, that is a terrifying situation. The purchase orders are subsequently done, providing the opportunity for abuse. I wonder if that is one of the reasons we have had to stop so many projects. Is it that this abuse of the procurement project has meant that the money has run out due to excessive cost overruns and that many projects have suffered?

Mr. Vice-President, it will be interesting if an audit were to be done by the HDC to try to match inventory and assets to purchase orders and, further, if purchase orders can be compared to other suppliers to determine whether there is a case of over-invoicing. I am told there is a case of over-invoicing.

As I understand it, HDC has a budget of \$5 billion per year. How has this money been spent?

5.15 p.m.

According to the Vision 2020 Operational Plan 2007/2010 and 2008/2009 Progress Report, there is something very interesting in this document that might interest the Members on the Government side. It says that since the inception of the programme in 2003, this programme is seven years old, over 32,500 housing units were started. It did not say built. These housing units are located in over 100 sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago. But, on the same page it says that those

32,500 were started since 2003. Here is the difference, over 11,200 homes were distributed since June 2003. Remember this is a report for 2009. You are telling me that 32,500 houses were started and 11,200, just about there, were delivered. From October 2008 to June 2009, 1,058 homes were completed. That aside, I ask the question: Is the Government saying that 21,300 houses are incomplete and cannot be delivered, or is the Government saying that they do not know whether they in fact have 32,500 start-up houses?

I understand, for example, that the case might be that they never started 32,500 houses, because of what happens to how contractors use their mobilization money. Contractors get mobilization funds, it is hoped that they will start it up, and they use the funds very inappropriately, causing the projects to stop. The projects were not even started, although the Government might be saying: "We have 32,500 houses starting up." There is a difference here between a start-up and a finished house, in which people are living. Has the Government done a physical count? I understand that the Government did attempt a physical count recently and could only find about 17,000 houses; counting apartments and everything. If that is true, then the extent of the corruption is much greater than we are saying.

It is estimated that near \$3.5 billion is required by the HDC for capital projects in 2009/2010. But I would like to know from the Minister: How much money has been spent, in fact, since 2003? I would like to ask one final question of the Minister: Is the Minister aware that within the HDC, they speak of something called silent projects, for which payments are made, but they are not on any official project listing of the company and that these projects are not officially listed by the projects department? They are not supervised or acknowledged. For example, is that true of a project called Almond Courts?

I want to thank you for this opportunity to present this Motion, but finally to ask: Of the \$18,584,813.32 spent to hire Evolve Partners, how has Evolve Partners contributed to the reduction in corruption of the HDC? I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Tina Gronlund-Nunez): Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I would like to repeat the Motion that is before us this afternoon by the hon. Senator: The failure of the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment to take appropriate measures to deal with allegations of the existence of, in his words, large-scale corruption at the Housing Development Corporation. Before I go into the details that I have before me here, I would like to ask the hon. Senator: What does he mean by large-scale corruption?

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Corruption, in accordance with my research here, is a social pathology. It has much of the same effect on the development of a nation, as does cancer on the life of an organism.

Large-scale corruption is supported by power networks. In order to function and survive, power networks require five capabilities: economic, technical, political, physical and ideological. Large-scale corruption is an emergent social process. The same governing factors that sustain large-scale corruption are in direct opposition to the efforts of a nation's development.

A perfect example of this can be found in a piece of literature entitled: "The History and Evolution of a Government Agency for Small Farmers in Developing Countries". It clearly states that while extracting wealth, corrupt power networks generate waste, reduce production and acrimony on the part of the victims.

It goes on to further state that for each dollar embezzled, there is a resulting loss of \$2.50. For every \$1 embezzled, there is loss to the people of \$2.50. The corrupt networks reached such a level in this instance that the government had to disassemble the agencies. The ability to detect and neutralize corrupt networks is essential to development.

I quoted that because I would like to make it very clear that such a network will never get the support politically by this Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Because of our fight against these sources of networks that exist within this country, this present administration has developed many enemies and one may even say enemies such as our Opposition here today.

As it was clearly stated, I would agree with the Senator, our Prime Minister has, on a number of occasions, admitted to this battle that this administration is going through at this present time. However, we have to take note that there do exist out there many, many allegations. However, this Government, this democratically-elected Government, can only operate by fact, not by rumour. Therefore, as clearly stated by the Prime Minister, investigations are taking place at this present time. Let me assure both you Senator and this Senate, that when those allegations, if they become real, those individuals would be sent to the proper authorities to ensure that corruption cease, hopefully, one day in this country.

With reference to the HDC, I would be one of the first people to admit that there exists evidence of faulty systems, lapses in processes and errors in the operations of the corporation. These are due largely to very poor and non-existing systems of controls and good governing practices. These poor practices also

contributed to the corporation not meeting its targets for housing and for, we would admit, very poor quality units, which have resulted in significant complaints and large expenditure on the HDC's part to correct the poor quality produced by our very own local contractors.

Under the watch of the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, major changes have been made to implement sound systems of control and to ensure that competent personnel are in place to provide leadership, and implement transparent systems, with related accountability measures. We have seen a significant transformation of the HDC from where it was and to this present time; a mere two years later.

In reply to the Motion before us here this evening by the Senator, I wish to, on behalf of the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, share with this Senate and the general public at large, the following issues that have come to hand and the appropriate measures that have been taken over the past two years.

An intense study into all aspects of the Housing Development Corporation has taken place over this period, involving interviews with key members of the organization. Financial and operational analysis and detailed operational studies were conducted during the period February to April 2009. This work was done jointly by the Evolve LLP Team and the HDC programme team members. The findings provided a compelling picture of both the challenges and opportunities facing the HDC.

The headline findings are summarized in accordance—which I will share with you this afternoon by business areas. In overall, the HDC in its Project Implementation Section, which is the lifeblood of the HDC, has performed well in some projects. However, the majority of projects do not perform well in time, cost and quality.

In 2008, the impact of this underperformance was a shortfall in house deliveries of approximately 6,600 units. In consequence, this has caused a shortfall in revenue and consequently a draw in government funds in the amount of approximately TT \$1.46 billion. The root causes impacting HDC's performance are:

- inadequate front-end project planning;
- inconsistent adherence to common processes;
- a lack of coordination with key stakeholders such as contractors, suppliers, public utilities, statutory agencies;

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- a lack of support processes in its inefficient financial control and allocations;
- the organization is under-resourced and we would admit, in its key positions.

However, at the core of all of these issues is the absence of a rigorous system for understanding how the organization is performing, so that it can take the right actions to achieve its goals, which is business management systems.

Therefore, the organization did not have a system, a coordinated annual plan and targets. It did not have a system for data records. It did not have a system for—

Sen. Mark: “Yuh should close down de HDC!”

Sen. The Hon. T. Gronlund-Nunez:—daily, weekly, monthly performance meetings, et cetera. It must be noted Senator, that the HDC, over these few years, has been able to produce more houses than the UNC ever did in its lifetime.

However, getting back to my response, the actual performance has never been analyzed and reported against any original projected plan, so there is little or better yet, an unclear understanding of where the teams stood, relative to their goals. It continues:

- limited understanding of priority issues and what needs to be done to get back on track.

Over this period, this investigating team also found that there was not a focus on reporting properly. In many cases, decisions were not prompt in action, but held back in order for it to come before a board, so therefore it acted more in a reactionary mode than an actionary mode. Meetings, in many cases, were ad hoc, generally called to address critical issues after they have arisen, rather than proactive to identify and address issues when they begin to occur. However, with these new systems coming into place, these sources of occurrences would be and should be rectified.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, project management was based on historical performance trends, and because of this HDC will run between \$64 million and \$1.7 billion over budget for eight of its largest projects. Based on historical performance trends, HDC will run between 27 and 48 months over schedule on the same said eight projects.

Sen. Mark: What is the total cost overrun?

Sen. The Hon. T. Gronlund-Nunez: The major root causes for this underperformance are:

- HDC made changes to its project scope due to inadequate front-end planning;
- highly variable contract performance coupled with inadequate HDC supervision of many local contractors;
- the use of design and construction consultants who are not adequately competent—sadly, these consultants with insufficient competence levels have not been filtered out of the HDC’s system;
- high fluctuations in prices of construction input, coupled with insufficient planning and contracting strategies that leave HDC fully exposed to these fluctuations; and
- inadequate front-end understanding of specification requirements that lead to re-work at the latter part of projects.

Mr. Vice-President, this team even found faults in the contractor management aspect of the HDC. There is a direct relationship between how closely HDC manages its contractors and the performance of their projects. Generally speaking, more units in a project manager’s portfolio, as indicated, caused many of these projects to fall behind and, therefore, increase the cost on these projects.

Mr. Vice-President, even within the allocation process, the HDC found itself in many hindrances in order to allocate units. When it was time to allocate, a number of issues came into being such as snagging issues; awaiting utility hook-ups and awaiting statutory approvals and many more. Also, within the HDC—within the system itself and even amongst the employees, a demoralized situation developed where the HDC was operating more on personality rather than data driven; reactive rather than proactive; individualist rather than team based.

Mr. Vice-President, after this analysis took place, the HDC in the eyes of the Ministry was in a poor state and a number of things had to be put in place over these two years. I would like to reassure this Senate that as bad as the situation was, the Ministry has tackled this effort head-on in order to put things right; in order to ensure that we continue to deliver on behalf of the man on the street, housing that is affordable so that he can get a home.

HDC (Allegations of Corruption)
[SEN. THE HON. T. GRONLUND-NUNEZ]

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

I would like to circulate after this a number of measures for the Senator and for his team—a number of things that have been done within the HDC for the last two years. I would like to also assure this Senate that when it comes to any activities of corruption, this ministry and this Government will ensure that it ceases.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.35 p.m.